

REMARKS

The above Amendments and these Remarks are in reply to the Office Action mailed August 4, 2003 (the "Office Action"). Claims 1-8 were pending in the Application prior to the outstanding Office Action. In the Office Action, claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claims 1 and 3-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e). Claims 1 and 3-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b). Claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

I. RESPONSE TO REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §112, SECOND PARAGRAPH

In paragraph 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter the applicants regard as their invention.

A. Independent Claim 1

The Examiner rejected claim 1, asserting that the phrases "workpieces located within the container" (line 7) and "the ambient environment" (line 9) lack an antecedent basis. Applicants have amended claim 1 to provide a proper antecedent basis for the phrase "workpieces located within the container." The phrase "ambient environment" has been deleted from claim 1. Thus, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to remove the rejection with regard to claim 1.

B. Dependent Claims 2-7

Dependent claims 2 and 4-5 have been cancelled. Thus, no response is required with regards to claims 2 and 4-5.

Dependent claims 3 and 6 depend directly or indirectly from independent claim 1. These dependent claims include all of the limitations of the independent claim from which they depend. Applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 3 and 6 are allowable at least for the reasons set forth above concerning independent claim 1.

Applicants have amended claim 7 to correct a typographical error by deleting the term “reticles” and replacing it with the term “workpieces.” Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner remove the rejection with regards to claim 7.

C. Independent Claim 8

Applicants have corrected the typographical error in claim 8 by deleting the phrase “between said slots and” prior to “the SMIF pod” in line 18. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner remove the rejection with regard to claim 8.

II. RESPONSE TO REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

In paragraph 6 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 3-5 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,517,304 issued to Matsumoto (“*Matsumoto*”).

Matsumoto discloses an apparatus that includes “a library for storing a plurality of the substrates in the vicinity of the semiconductor manufacturing unit.” *Matsumoto*; col. 4, lines 1-3. The library 53 stores each reticle 1 in a horizontal orientation on a stationary shelf. *Matsumoto*; Figure 10. The reticles 1 are vertically stacked. *Matsumoto*; Figure 10.

A. Independent Claim 1 Patentably Distinguishes over *Matsumoto*

Amended claim 1, in part, recites:

“a stocker having an isolated storage area with rotatable shelves, said rotatable shelves adapted to store each workpiece after the workpiece has been removed from said container in a substantially vertical orientation;”

The library 53 disclosed in *Matsumoto* fails to teach storing “each workpiece, after the workpiece has been removed from said container in a substantially vertical orientation.” The library 53 disclosed in *Matsumoto* stores each reticle 1 in a horizontal orientation. In addition, the shelves of the library 53 are stationary -- they cannot rotate. Since *Matsumoto* does not disclose every element of claim 1, Applicants respectfully suggest that the system recited in claim 1 is not anticipated by *Matsumoto*.

B. Dependent Claim 3 Patently Distinguishes over *Matsumoto*

Dependent claim 3 depends directly or indirectly from independent claim 1. This dependent claim includes all of the limitations of the independent claim from which it depends. Applicants respectfully assert that dependent claim 3 is allowable for at least the reasons set forth above concerning independent claim 1.

C. Dependent Claims 4 and 5

Dependent claims 4 and 5 have been cancelled. Thus, no response is required with regard to claims 4 and 5.

III. RESPONSE TO REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

In paragraph 7 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 3-7 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by International Publication No. WO 99/65064 issued to Hasper et al. ("*Hasper*").

The apparatus disclosed in *Hasper* stores cassettes 10 in a stocker 8 until the wafers 13 within the cassette 10 are ready for processing. "Wafers 13 are supplied in (transport) cassettes 10 which, from the introduction chamber 33, are placed in store 8 through a closable opening 34 with the aid of arm 31." *Hasper*, p. 4, lines 15-17. The wafers 13 remain in cassettes 10 while the cassettes 10 are stored in store 8. "Each of the cassettes 10 is transferred from the introduction chamber 33 with the aid of arm 31 into the storage compartments 9 made for these cassettes in store 8." *Hasper*, p. 4, line 31 – p. 5, line 2. Store 8 can rotate such that "it is possible to fill various compartments with cassettes 10." *Hasper*, p. 5, line 5. A second arm 31 removes the cassettes 10 from store 8 and place the cassette 10 on a rotary platform 30. The wafers 13 are then "taken one by one from the cassette concerned with the aid of arm 24 and can be placed in the wafer rack 12 located in chamber 22." *Hasper*, p. 4, lines 25-26.

A. Independent Claim 1 Patently Distinguishes over *Hasper*

Claim 1, in part, recites:

“a stocker having an isolated storage area with rotatable shelves, said rotatable shelves adapted to store each workpiece after the workpiece has been removed from said container in a substantially vertical orientation; and

a workpiece transfer mechanism for transferring each workpiece between the container and said isolated storage area.”

Hasper fails to teach a stocker that stores each workpiece “after the workpiece has been removed from the container.” The Examiner suggests that the wafer rack 12 discussed in *Hasper* is a stocker. Applicants respectfully disagree. A stocker stores wafers and/or wafer cassettes while the wafers are waiting to be processed. The wafer rack 12 in *Hasper* is a processing rack that introduces the wafers 13 into the processing tool (e.g. furnaces 6 and 7 in *Hasper*). The stocker in *Hasper* is the store 8. Store 8 houses cassettes 10. Thus, *Hasper* does not disclose storing each workpiece in a stocker “after the workpiece has been removed from the container.”

Moreover, *Hasper* does not teach “a workpiece transfer mechanism for transferring each workpiece between the container and said isolated storage area.” In contrast, *Hasper* discloses an arm 31 that transfers cassettes 10. Arm 31 never removes the wafer 13 from a cassette 10. *Hasper* requires a second arm 24 to remove wafers 13 from cassette 10. Neither of the transfer mechanisms in *Hasper* (e.g., arm 24 and 31) teach a transfer mechanism for transferring a workpiece between a container and a stocker. Accordingly, *Hasper* does not disclose every element recited in claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully suggest that the system recited in claim 1 is not anticipated by *Hasper*.

B. Dependent Claims 3 and 6-7 Patently Distinguish over *Hasper*

Dependent claims 3 and 6-7 depend directly or indirectly from independent claim 1. These dependent claims include all of the limitations of the independent claim from which they depend. Applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 3 and 6-7 are allowable for at least the reasons set forth above concerning independent claim 1.

C. Dependent Claims 4 and 5

Dependent claims 4 and 5 have been cancelled. Thus, no response is required with regard to claims 4 and 5.

IV. RESPONSE TO REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

In paragraph 9 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claim 2 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Matsumoto* or *Hasper*, in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,886,412 issued to Wooding et al ("*Wooding*"). Claim 2 has been cancelled. Therefore, no response is required with regard to claim 2.

Additional Remarks

The references cited by the Examiner but not relied upon have been reviewed, but are not believed to render the claims unpatentable, either singly or in combination.

In light of the above, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims now pending in the subject patent application are allowable, and a Notice of Allowance is requested.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-0639 for any matter in connection with this response, including any fee for extension of time, which may be required.

Respectfully submitted,

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